



**TESTIMONY
BARBARA HENRY
PAST PRESIDENT
COST
BEFORE THE
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 7, 2013**

RE: HB-5751, AN ACT CONCERNING RESIDENT STATE TROOPERS

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) strongly supports HB-5751 which would require the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) to develop a program to permit towns to share a resident state trooper.

In 2011, the state legislature increased the amount towns are required to reimburse the state for Resident State Trooper overtime costs from 70% to 100%. When we request OT, our Resident Trooper's name goes into a pool and a trooper is assigned for that OT. With what we pay annually for Resident Trooper service – over \$100,000 – and is promoted by “community policing” we should at least have our own Trooper be able to take the OT. In addition to our Resident Trooper, Troop A would also provide a patrol in our community. With the changes at Troop A, our Patrol 6 now also covers the Troop. When our Trooper is at training or takes vacation, we don't get a replacement for that time. When there is a large-scale event – i.e., an accident on I-84 – our Troopers are pulled to help out. And we are more than happy to lend a hand to our neighboring towns because they would do the same for us; but I'm just pointing out that we don't get a replacement when those things occur and our Trooper is out of our town. As a result, small towns are exploring ways to reduce costs associated with the Resident State Trooper program while maintaining critical public safety services.

COST members are reviewing options for: 1) Sharing Resident State Troopers between two or more trooper-only towns, including towns that do not share a geographic border; and 2) Providing supervision of a regional police department or constabulary that includes two or more Resident Trooper Towns. And in order for us to keep our constabulary, we need a Resident State Trooper to supervise them.

Section 29-5 of the Connecticut General Statutes authorizes the appointment of resident state troopers “in any town or two or more *adjoining* towns lacking an organized police force.” Unfortunately, towns that have explored this option have encountered certain obstacles. COST representatives met with DESPP last year to discuss this issue and were advised that “there are potential liability and labor concerns that would warrant careful consideration by the Attorney General's Office and our agency's administration before such an arrangement could be established.”



It is our understanding that some towns did request clarification of these issues from Attorney General Blumenthal's office but did not receive such clarification and have since decided not to pursue this option.

However, I am here not only to represent COST but the towns of Roxbury and Bridgewater who would like to share a Resident State Trooper. In many areas, the Governor is pushing towards regionalization. Here is an instance where the Commissioners should be told to expedite this idea as it would provide an avenue for voluntary regionalization and would achieve economic savings not only at the local level but would free up and provide better use of State resources. Given the ongoing budget pressure on towns, assisting towns in developing a program to share Resident State Troopers would be very helpful.

Take into consideration a comparison of a sampling of town populations and square miles and Resident Trooper's serving those towns:

- Roxbury and Bridgewater, who both have low crime rates, have a combined population of @ 4,200 with a total of 43.6 square miles – 2 Resident State Troopers serve this area. A combined constabulary would be 4 vs. 1 in Roxbury and 3 in Bridgewater.
- Salisbury – population of @ 4,000 and 60.1 square miles (not counting the prep school) – 1 Resident State Trooper
- Barkhamsted – population of @ 3,700 and 36.2 square miles – 1 Resident State Trooper
- Montville – population of @ 20,000 and 42 square miles – 1 Resident State Trooper
- Southbury – population @ 19,700 and 39.1 square miles – 1 Resident State Trooper and 1 Sergeant

In addition, this option should be available for towns regardless of whether they share a geographic border so COST would support the deletion of the word "adjoining" from the statute.

As far as I can tell, nothing exists that legally prohibits sharing Resident State Troopers except the appearance that some Connecticut State Police do not want to do it. However, there are many Troopers who would apply for those jobs if available.

COST urges the Public Safety Committee to support HB-5751 to assist towns in addressing existing obstacles to opportunities to share Resident State Troopers.

Thank you for your consideration.